

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE PEOPLE'S
MUJAHIDEEN ORGANIZATION OF
IRAN

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 14, 2008

Mr. TANCREDO. Madam Speaker, in the 1980's the United States supported and helped arm the Afghan resistance to Soviet occupation of their country, a policy later portrayed in the award-winning Tom Hanks movie, "Charlie Wilson's War." Today we need to show support for dissidents fighting to overthrow the terrorist regime in Tehran. It will come as a surprise to most Americans that we are not doing so.

In that struggle to push the Soviets out of Afghanistan, not all of those Afghan freedom-fighters were fighting for democracy. It was a coalition of forces who had one thing in common: they wanted the Soviets out of their country. We supported them, and they won. Not only did the Soviets leave Afghanistan, within four years the Soviet Union imploded.

One of the main groups fighting to overthrow the Ahmadinejad regime is the People's Mujahideen Organization of Iran (PMOI)—also called the MEK—and its political arm, the National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI). Strangely, instead of assisting these dissidents, our Department of State decided to label them terrorists in 1997.

In the decade since, a debate has raged about whether the designation of the MEK as a terrorist group was driven less by the facts than it was a desire on the part of State Department bureaucrats to curry favor with "moderates" in the government of then-Iranian President Mohammad Khatami. Either way, it is has become clear that this "good will gesture" on the part of the State Department failed to yield any progress with Tehran.

The MEK advocates a secular democratic government for Iran, one that that respects human rights and basic freedoms (including freedom of the press and freedom of religion) and has provided intelligence and assistance about the activities of the Iranian regime in Iraq, and Tehran's covert nuclear program. Moreover, a number of the group's members are under the protection of Coalition troops in Iraq.

Unfortunately, the group was recently the victim of a missile attack at Camp Ashraf in Iraq. This is a testament to how much Tehran fears the group.

I hope the Iranian regime will refrain from future attacks of this nature, as Ashraf's residents are protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Their well being is and continues to be the obligation of the Coalition troops in Iraq, and the Iraqi government.

This raises another interesting point. Not only does the MEK not behave like a terrorist group, in many respects the U.S. government does not treat them like one.

The MEK is a group that the United States and the west should cultivate as we seek an organic, democratic change agent in Iran.

Fortunately, the United Kingdom has already come to this conclusion in removing the MEK from the British terrorist list earlier this year.

Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were willing to enter into an alliance with Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union in 1941 in order to defeat Hitler. We used every ally and every resource to defeat the Axis Powers. Yet today, in dealing with the terrorist regime of Iran, a regime that daily threatens to destroy Israel and the U.S. (the "Great Satan") and is actively seeking the means of fulfilling that threat, we cannot find it in our interest to render aid to the People's Mujahideen of Iran because of its checkered past.

It is time for the western world to re-examine our treatment of the MEK in the wake of the UK court decision.

For starters, the political goals behind designating the MEK as a terrorist organization here in the U.S. have failed to materialize. If anything, the Iranian government has become more aggressive and repressive in the years since the MEK designation. Iran is supporting violence and terrorism from Baghdad to Beirut, has defied U.N. demands to end its nuclear enrichment program, and shows no signs of moderating its behavior—test firing missiles yesterday in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

What better way to send a message to Tehran than to free the MEK from the international stigma that comes with the 'terrorist' label.

This year's U.S. State Department Country Reports on Terrorism rightly brands the Iranian government as the number one state sponsor of global terrorism. Iran has also been the principal supplier of IEDs to terrorists in Iraq who are killing American soldiers and Iraqi civilians.

Despite continued efforts at diplomacy, financial sanctions, and—in the case of placing the MEK on various terrorist lists—outright appeasement by many western countries, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has declared that his country will never yield its "dignity" by suspending its uranium enrichment program.

U.S., EU and UN negotiators have been talking with Tehran about its nuclear program for many years, but Tehran has shown no sign of changing course. And why should they when we keep handcuffs on Iranian dissidents who might cause the Iranian regime real problems?

If western efforts at "dialogue" and "diplomacy" are to be successful, they must be more than opportunities for Iran to stall for time while moving forward with their nuclear program. A willingness to negotiate with carrots doesn't work unless one is willing to use a few sticks as well.

Today, there no longer remain any legal or political justifications for maintaining the MEK on the terror list. I therefore urge our govern-

ment to seriously reconsider its stance on the democratic opposition of Iran and remove the group from our list of terrorist organizations.

It's time to take the handcuffs off of the MEK.

IN RECOGNITION OF CHRIS
MURZIN, UNIVERSITY PARK'S
2008 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 14, 2008

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Chris Murzin who was named University Park's 2008 Citizen of the Year.

Chris and his family moved to University Park in 2006 and have been active members of our local community. As a father of a child with special needs, he was quick to identify local accessibility issues and has dedicated himself to improving the lives of the disabled. He is constantly on the forefront of our community—educating the public, meeting with officials from Highland Park Independent School District and PTA members, and coordinating a citizen-based fund drive to build a barrier-free playground. I know he will continue to strive for a better life for the disabled by serving as a vocal advocate. His vision and commitment to this cause has already led to greater awareness in University Park and will soon be evidenced by a barrier-free playground at Coffee Park.

Madam Speaker, I ask my esteemed colleagues to join me in expressing our sincerest congratulations to him and our heartfelt gratitude for his dedicated efforts to better the lives of the disabled.

DR. JOSHUA CULBREATH

HON. JOE SESTAK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 14, 2008

Mr. SESTAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the career of a remarkable individual on the occasion of his induction into the United States Marine Corps Hall of Fame: Dr. Joshua "Josh" Culbreath, a native of Norristown, PA and an Olympic athlete, who distinguished himself as a community leader.

Dr. Culbreath was a bronze medalist as a member of the United States' 400 meter hurdling team in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, part of an American clean sweep of the medals in that race. As a star track and field athlete, he was a state high school champion and was a three time national 440 yard hurdles champion, setting a world record in that event.

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